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UNCLAS KATHMANDU 001743

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR SA/INS, S/CT, AND DS  
ISLAMABAD FOR AMBASSADOR POWELL  
LONDON FOR POL/GURNEY  
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: PARTIES CONTINUE PROTESTS, GOVERNMENT  
REACTION "EXEMPLARY"

REF: KATHMANDU 1713

1. (U) On September 8, the five major political parties continued with their fifth day of protest in Kathmandu, culminating in the arrest of an estimated 90-100 people in various parts of the city. The parties have called off the protest scheduled for September 9 because of a Newari festival day. However, the parties will continue with their final day of protest on September 10. The protests over the last five days have been modest in size, well disciplined, and non-violent. On September 8, Arjun Narasingha K.C., spokesperson for the Nepali Congress party, reported to the Ambassador that the police response to the protests has been "exemplary."

2. (U) The Embassy's Political Specialist contacted each of the party headquarters to learn how many of their members had been arrested and released. As of the morning of September 8 (not including this afternoon's arrests):

-- The Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (UML) reported 1,050 members arrested, including five Central Committee members. While the police have released 900, Central Committee member Bam Dev Gautum, arrested September 7, and 150 others remain in police custody.

-- The Nepali Congress (NC) Kathmandu Office Secretary, Sobhakar Parajuli, reports that roughly 900 party members have been arrested and 694 have been released. Seven leaders of the party have been arrested with only Central Committee member Lila Koirala, arrested September 7, still in custody.

-- The Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi Devi) faction had 93 members arrested with all but nine released. Three party leaders arrested during the protest have already been released.

-- 125 People's Front Nepal (PFN) members were arrested, including the party President. The Party President and 81 party members have been released.

-- The smallest member of the coalition, the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP), reported that 66 members were arrested--43 have now been released.

3. (SBU) Comment: The parties have successfully demonstrated against the Government's temporary ban on the right to assemble, while the police have maintained order in a professional manner. The protests, despite significant concerns of Maoist infiltration (Reftel), were carried out without serious incident. It is rumored that the parties' leaders will head the program on the last day of the joint agitation, September 10. The protest coincides with the return of King Gyanendra, who has been out of the country since August 24. Party leaders continue to seek some signal from the Palace that the King may be willing to come to a political understanding with the estranged parties.

MALINOWSKI